

Quick guide to Student Complaints

Quick links

Birkbeck Students' Union has a dedicated advice service for students and can provide guidance and support to students thinking of submitting a complaint. You can reach a Student Adviser by email at su-advice@bbk.ac.uk or by telephone on 020 7631 6655.

Please see the [Student Complaints Policy](#) for more detailed information.

What is meant by complaint?

A complaint is a written expression of dissatisfaction about the College's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College.

There is a [separate process for appeals](#) if you are unhappy with academic decisions regarding assessment outcomes, mitigating circumstances, progression or termination of registration.

The College welcomes feedback from students. If you wish to give informal feedback, you can do so by contacting the relevant department directly.

Who can complain?

Any currently registered Birkbeck student can complain, as well as students who left the College no more than three months ago (either because they have been awarded a degree or because they have formally ceased their studies). Applicants to the College can also complain, but only if they think that the Admissions Policy has not been applied properly.

Why complain?

Before complaining, you should *always* try to seek informal resolution with your Department first. A list of departmental early resolution contacts can be found on the [Regulations and Policies](#) page, or there are plenty of other ways for you to raise concerns and provide feedback:

- talk directly to your module convenor, dissertation or project supervisor, personal tutor, or another member of staff in your Department;
- visit the [Professional Services Directory](#);
- contact Student Advice, or raise a query through ASK;
- ask your Student Rep to raise your concerns on your behalf;
- complete Module Evaluation surveys and student surveys;
- contact the Students Union.

Before you submit a complaint, think about what outcome you want to achieve. If you want an explanation, an apology, or simply to talk your concerns through with someone, then this is more appropriately handled informally than through the formal complaints process.

If you submit a formal complaint, you will be asked if you have attempted early resolution and might be referred back to your Department to attempt this in the first instance.

When can I complain?

Any complaint should be made within four weeks of the incident(s) you are complaining about having occurred. Any complaint submitted after this deadline may not be accepted

unless you have compelling reasons for not having complained sooner. This deadline is in place to ensure that an effective investigation can be carried out and any issues rectified promptly, which becomes more difficult after long periods of time have elapsed. Please note that lengthy attempts at early resolution will not be accepted as a reason for missing the deadline.

How do I submit a complaint?

You submit a formal complaint by completing the [complaints form](#) and sending it to studentcomplaints@bbk.ac.uk. Any relevant evidence to the complaint must be attached along with the complaint form. Your complaint should be as clear and concise as possible; while it can be tempting to provide lots of details, this can often get in the way of your main point(s) and desired outcomes being understood.

Submitting evidence to support a complaint

Evidence to support your complaint should usually be in written form. For example, if you are complaining about slow responses to emails from a department, you could include an email correspondence, showing clearly the emails you sent that received no response. If you do not have written evidence of an incident, you could submit statements from other students or staff who were present at the time. Please note, Birkbeck does not record telephone conversations.

Your preferred outcomes

It is important to include a clear expression of what you would consider a satisfactory resolution to your complaint when you first submit your complaint. This will allow us to better understand what outcomes you are hoping to achieve and how we can best help you. It will also allow us to advise you in circumstances where the desired outcomes are not feasible, or within the limits of the Complaints Policy.

What happens when I complain?

When you submit a complaint, it will be considered by Registry staff. If they consider the complaint to be in time and valid, they will either request a response from the relevant School or service, or refer the complaint on to an independent investigator. Any response to the complaint, or the investigation outcome, will be communicated to you by Registry staff. If your complaint is considered better dealt with at the early resolution stage, it might be referred back to the relevant School or service to handle informally.

What if I want to challenge the complaint outcome?

If you believe that the complaint outcome was unreasonable, against College regulation or policy, or that a mistake was made in the handling of your complaint, you can request that the complaint is reviewed. You should do this within two weeks of getting the complaint outcome. If your request is accepted, you may be given a written resolution, be referred to mediation, or the complaint may be referred to a complaint panel.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator

If you've completed the College's internal complaints process and remain unsatisfied, you can refer your complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#). In order to contact the OIA the College needs to provide you with a Completion of Procedures letter.